

**Tribhuvan University**

**Struggle for Black Identity: A Foucauldian Reading of *A Raisin in the Sun* by  
Lorraine Hansberry**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

**By**

**Sunita Bhattarai**

**Symbol No: 280437**

**T.U. Regd.No.: 6-2-0575-0077-2012**

**Central Department of English**

**Kritipur, Kathmandu**

**July 2022**

## Acknowledgements

The present study would not have been complete without the encouragement and scholarly guidance of Dr. Shiva Rijal, Assistant Professor of Central Department of English T.U apart from providing relevant source materials, he guided me right from the beginning to very end, frequently checking the content and the structure of study, going painstakingly through the script and correcting mistakes. In this regard, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to him for being such a cooperative supervisor.

I am also thankful to Prof. Dr. JibLalSapkota, Head of the Central Department of English, for the approval for this research work, I would like to extend my gratitude to all other respected Lectures, Professors and Faculty Members who inspired me to achieve my dream of being a graduate in Master of Arts in English Literature. My special appreciation goes to my family for supporting me throughout my life and study. I thank to my friend Ms. ShanisaThokar for her feedbacks and suggestions regarding my research work.

July 2022

SunitaBhattarai

## Abstract

*This research paper examines the mode of African Americans' struggle for their identity during the 1950s from the theoretical perspective developed by Michel Foucault on the subject of power and identity. For this, it has selected A Raisin in the Sun as a primary text. It argues that African Americans faced two major challenges in the 1950s: assimilation and identity choices. During the decade African Americans started to protest against racial discrimination through the Black Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement. As part of these movements, African Americans rejected to accept the white power structure's rationalization for the continued treatment of Blacks as inferior. Black people endeavored to define their identity through various aspects like having their own home, perusing education, owning their own business, and so on. In the play A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry the character Beneatha shows her social attitude and cultural practices. She shows her pride in one's African heritage and tries to stand up and fight for her own identity. Searching for their identity is more challenging for African Americans because they are often discriminated. On the other hand, another character George Murchison shows his anti-social behavior in his own Black culture and his assimilation attitude in the dominant White culture. He is educated but an obnoxious self-hearted person who has no respect for any of the accomplishments of the Black people. Socially, politically and economically the black families try to establish the fact that they are so much capable of uplifting their social and economic status as white are.*

**Keywords:** Racism, Double Consciousness, Identity, Black Civil Rights Movement

Struggle for Black identity: A Foucauldian Reading of *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine  
Hansberry

*A Raisin in the Sun* was published in 1959. It is based on the experiences of the writer herself during the Civil Rights movement. "I was born black and female" Hansberry writes in her unpublished autobiographical play (Nemiroff 41). "Black" and "female" identities dominated her life and writing but she refused the limitation on her race and her gender. Her consciousness about her identity labeled her writing in the struggle for black liberation and she became a collective voice for voiceless Black people. She fought devotedly against racism and discrimination through her writing and wanted all African Americans to be in the struggle against racial discrimination to fight for equality in American society. Hansberry creates her own life and the struggle of her family throughout the Younger family in the play.

The play *A Raisin in the Sun* is about a black family who lives on the south side of Chicago and struggling through family and economic hardship, facing the issues of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. "Our Southside is a place apart. Each piece of our living is a protest" adds Hansberry (Nemiroff 117). During that time white supremacy determined huge racial discrimination between Whites and Blacks. All Blacks were segregated into ghetto communities while Whites lived a prosperous life. This was also the period many African Americans started living as a neighbor to the prosperous White families as part of providing their children a better life. Many African Americans escaped from the poverty of ghetto communities to prosperous white neighborhoods to give their children a better life. "We must come out of the ghettos of America because the ghettos are killing us; not only our dream, as Mama says, but our very bodies" Hansberry recalls her past (Nemiroff 117). Though it was almost an impossible task for most African Americans could not pursue

homeownership. They could not even run their own business, and they were forced to be handed their very existence over to Whites.

Identity defines the complete personality of individuals who are they, and how they live their lives. One's identity plays a very crucial role to emerge as a strong individual and identifying self-ability. People identify their identity in terms of their relationships, beliefs, values, and affiliation. However, society plays an essential role to develop their identity. It is influenced by class, caste, gender, religion, and race it shapes the challenges we face and opportunities we get. According to the Erik Erikson, fundamental organizing principles develop which remain influential and constant throughout the lifespan. So it entails the person's experiences, memories, and changes. Hence, during the period of slavery, Blacks faced a great challenge that took away their very existence. The institution of the slave system became the main cause of the first identity crisis of Black Americans when they were forced to accept the strange identity, from African to a slave. The family of Blacks was broken up both in America and Africa; husbands and wives, parents and children were separated. They were confronted with a new language; culture, and society. So without family, relationship, community, religion, and nationality, it was not possible to identify themselves and make their own identity in America.

It was a painful experience for the African-Americans in the United States that drove them to fight to establish their identity of their own. They were brought to the new land and prohibited from doing their social and cultural practices for political reasons. The former slave Olaudah Equiano writes, "I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly (73). The practice of the slave system robbed African Americans of more than their freedom. It robbed their identity their

deep knowing of who they are, and where they came from, and forced them to accept their new identity as a slave. Subsequently; their previous African identity and heritage are distorted and impaired as time passing.

The Blacks had to depend on the identification that slaveholders provided to them. As a result Blacks could not develop self-reliance and self-determination in United State of America. Over time they lost their immediate sense of ethnicity; they could not be attached to other people, society, community, and culture so their identity was featured by the dominant culture of that time. African Americans' identity was affected by historical factors and the dominant White culture. Blacks lived among societal institutions founded on white superiority and the inferiority of the Black subculture. In the process of adopting identity, gradually they realized their origins would give meaning to their life. They developed their self-esteem through religion, language, and music and they started to search for their existence as well as in America. But Within white cultural dominance Blacks were enveloped by the patterns of depersonalization and conflict in social values and experiences that seem like unresolvable conflicts but Blacks are struggling for a satisfying identity of self-image. They were deprived of their true identity, and where they grew up placed them in a second class of society which prioritized the Whites. The detachment of their own identity and carried racial hatred from dominant White culture Blacks' struggle for their existence and for their identity ended only with the death, leaving the problem as a legacy for the next generation.

This paper tries to discover how the African Americans managed to get their dignity in the United States of America. During the period Whites were valued at the cost of dehumanize Blacks which led to racial enmity and created a diverse society in the same country. On the other hand, African Americans started protesting against

White supremacy through Civil Right Movement and Black Power Movement.

Additional to the class concept African Americans were victimized and marginalized due to their race they were valued as workers who could make money for plantation owners, even after the Emancipation free slave were banned from learning how to read and write. Du Bois writes, “The community of the Blacks lived drawn together by the common experience of the cycle of life poverty, hardship, and the “veil that hung between us and opportunity” (87). In the 1940s-1950s law system allowed White supremacists to legally commit violent acts on previously enslaved African Americans. During the Civil Right Movement, in the 1950s “Jim Crow law made it an even bigger stigma to be colored, and any hope of equality between the races came to a grinding halt”, Delane sisters writes (187). Those days Black and White were separated “Separate but equal” and restrictions were imposed by the Black code which made it hard for formerly enslaved people to gain economic independence. All the segregated facilities on public transportation carriers made it more difficult for Black to travel, it made it impossible for Black people to vote, be elected to office, serve on juries, or participate as equals in the economic or social life of their area. In the same country, some are treated better than others due to their lighter skin tone. After the racial segregation South was divided into two separate worlds at every level of life: school, workplace, churches, culture, transportation, hospital, and jail. The majority of the Blacks remained poor deprived of wealth, safety, and opportunity because of the poverty they are forced to enter unfair working contracts to take care of their family.

Nevertheless, they started to seek justice and equality. The policy of racial segregation indirectly forced Black to develop skills and gain jobs to take care of other Blacks so White would not have the responsibilities. Teaching, nursing, and

social work, jobs were open to Black. Black leaders started to gain intellectual achievement and make political demands. They asked for the right to vote they empower themselves through education, some came into politics as leader. Since the emancipation politically Blacks were free but the reality of their lives was constricted as imprisonment. Although Whites and Blacks in America inhabited the same community they were separated into two worlds. The young generation of African Americans was discriminated against since their childhood they discover the discrimination between Whites and Blacks at an early age so they easily accepted the exclusion and mistreatment within society with the idea of God made them outsiders within their own country. “The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with certain suddenness that I was different from the others” writes Du Bois (45). It was very difficult for African Americans to access the education they faced with overwhelming prejudice and oppression. Somehow education simultaneously empowered and equipped them with knowledge and skill and awakened them to the reality of the vast injustice they had faced. Though to protect the law and freed slave, the slavery radically transformed the political, economic, and social organization through the freedmen’s Bureau. But the discriminatory lending practices of the institutions and the law after the racial segregation in South historically privileged Whites and trapped the African Americans in poor neighborhoods disenfranchised them and legally defined them as second-class citizens. Most of the Southern Black Americans lived in desperate rural poverty so they had to rent land from former slave owners for their economic circumstances as a result freed slaves were treated like white property. Therefore, they started to tie with their own kind and strengthened their harmony through the Black Power movement which emphasized racial pride,

economic empowerment, Black self-reliance, and self-determination with the purpose of African Americans should secure their human rights by creating political and cultural institutions. Among the different cultures and social traditions which are inherited from Africa, drama occupied the best representative for portraying several aspects of cognition which are African American Discourse for that reason this study has selected Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. She is speaking on the behalf of all African Americans in her literary piece it deals with several issues like racial, generational, assimilation, and the conflict between idealism, the pursuit of the American dream, and pride in one's racial and cultural heritage.

African Americans were dominated controlled and exploited by white society. "The nation has not yet found peace from its sin; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land", adds Du Bois (47). During the reconstruction time, most of the freed slaves were left without the land they had been promised so they had to work for the landowner at very low wages, they were not even able to build their own homes so they had to arrange for the whole family together in a small apartment. After emancipation the first decade they were so much powerless and helpless because they faced so many modes of violent racism including "the terrors of the Ku Klux Klan, the carnage of the Civil War, the lies of carpetbaggers and the disorganization of industry", Du Bois adds again (47). The Black Power movement of the 1950s had tried to help Blacks to break out of the pattern and achieve a better self-image. An increasing number of young African Americans started to protest against racial segregation. They chose for self-empowerment, rights, and political power, equality and destruction of white power, and the first ideology and white supremacy for Blacks who had been denied voice, vote, and opportunity. Hansberry is using inspiration in the play from her year growing up in the segregated south side of

Chicago where they struggled very hard to make a better life. The American socio-economic and political forces that determined to adopt western culture and return to their African root. African Americans express folklore and religion, clothing, cuisine, music and language, and hairstyle through their cultural values and belief.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was full of sorrow for Blacks. During the time, they struggled to establish meaningful identities based on liberty and equality. The new generations of African Americans dealt with the issues of identity and choice some looked for their identity within White society, while others wanted to return to Africa to find their original heritage. How did African Americans become rootless from their African heritage? After the Civil Rights movement the result of living in and being educated in a predominantly White space was at best, complicated, and at worst, alienating and discriminatory. And it was challenging for Blacks to develop a healthy sense of self-image because they were being raised and educated in predominantly white space. Most of the African American youths commonly encounter experiences of racially discriminatory treatment at that time in the United State. A popular ecological-cultural framework asserted that African Americans' historical experiences of discrimination and barriers to economic and social mobility led to the development of an oppositional culture towards the mainstream institution, including school and pro-academic values and engagement behaviors.

The system of slavery deprived them of carrying their heritage they were even underprivileged from the right and the public facilities were segregated by racism which was highly protected by the law of America. Moreover, Chicago where they used to live was strictly divided into black and white neighborhoods despite not having segregation laws. When Jim Crow Law was strictly enforced in America "separate but equal" became immoral and it was inherently unequal which was based

on white supremacy Black citizens to inferior treatment and facilities. They tried hard to establish their capability and uplift their socioeconomic and political status but unfortunately, in the 1950s most of the young Blacks influenced by mainstream American values and the predominantly white society others are trapped in between Assimilation and identity choices. In the play, Hansberry's all four characters except Travis show their different attitude toward making their own identity. Mama and Ruth dream to have their own house which will give them an identity, Beneatha tries to escape from the working-class culture by trying to become a doctor, which gives her identity in society. Walter Lee Younger also endeavors to escape from the working-class culture by building a liquor store, which makes his identity as an owner. All the four characters are trying to get themselves out of their lifestyle and make their own identity. It shows that most African Americans begin to identify themselves by developing their abilities. The play *A Raisin in the Sun* insists on the African Americans' cultural values which are subverted by western American cultural values they treat money as everything and will bring families happiness and makes them as powerful as white American in society which is the common plight of a mass of African Americans.

The new generation of African American influenced by the economic power so they believed money can shape their social and political status as well it gives freedom and makes people feel secure. Hansberry's character Walter Lee also believes in an economically progressive masculine identity. He accepts that he can create the right kind of identity in society by making money by opening a liquor store and building his social status and his class in society like white people. Walter expresses his feeling of being inferior in society to his mama when he says that "sometimes when I'm downtown and pass them cool quiet-looking restaurants where

them white boys are sitting back and talking about things sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollar” (1.2. 74). His job as a driver barely pays him enough money to take care of his family. As a white man’s chauffeur gives him a feeling of inferiority he is stressed by his socioeconomic position so somewhat he feels powerless to help them better their situation. In his home, Mama maintains most of the power over the household due to her generational authority but Walter desperately wants to take his father’s place as head of the family and control the family’s finances and the lives of his family members to do so. His ambition and vision emerged inside him and encourages him to be powerful and passionate to make money by owning his own business.

This play *A Raisin in the Sun* has received much criticism and praise from various critics. Since its first production, it has been staged many times by regional and University theaters, many critics have come up with different perspectives and some observe the literary analysis of the text. We can find so many reviews by different critics by bringing the issues of Segregation, Issues of women, mobility, and political and social issues can be seen in different reviews by different critics. J. Charles Washington emphasizes that “our literary judgments, to a large extent, are determined by our moral standards, by our adherence to the rules society deem appropriate. Generally, these standards differ according to the sex of the individual: A good woman is sweet gentle ---feminine” (11). Some of Hansberry’s characters accommodate the social criterion for women; she challenges the measurement of society by introducing varied personalities. Beneatha Younger’s denial in the society’s limitation on her race and gender or her relationship with George and Asagai to choose her life partner is examples of Hansberry’s correction of the stereotypical social norms. According to the common standards, George Murchinson should

technically be considered Washington's "good man." He is proud, tough, and fierce, thus an obvious expectant for affection and acceptance from Beneatha and the younger family. Instead, he is depicted as "shallow" and selfish. He only cares about his reputation and honor and does not respect those that he believes is of a lower status than him. For example, during his exchange with Walter Younger, George looks up at him with distaste, a little above it all, exposing his misapprehension of supremacy. This abhorrent attitude created a negative atmosphere instead of that of a "good man." And the opposite, Joseph Asagai perceives as a contemptible man, his later determination deems him worthy of a positive portrayal. Whereas, some of the personalities in *A Raisin in the Sun* are in agreement with J. Charles Washington's definition of a "good man" and "good woman." Hansberry also comes across it by including a diversity of characters. George, Asagai, and Beneatha challenge the traditional criteria through their paradoxical natures and depictions, while Ruth complies with the society-deemed guidelines. Walter's strange combination of opposite depictions also argued for the legitimacy of the orthodox classifications. Lorraine Hansberry creates a framework for understanding the various forms of good men and women by introducing them throughout *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Michelle Gordon states, "*A Raisin in the Sun* directly engages segregation symbol of Black oppression struggle in Chicago as a penultimate symbol of Black oppression and resistance. In doing so, Hansberry brought the local individual struggle of African Americans against segregation, ghettoization, and capitalist exploitation-to the national stage" (121-122). Chicago's housing segregation and the racism surrounding, it is acknowledged early Hansberry's firsthand experience with urban segregation in Chicago assisted her with creating *A Raising in the Sun* as stated before. He believes that Hansberry's exposure to urban segregation has shaped her

thoughts to bring revolutionary art against the racism discrimination. Gordon claims that Hansberry exposed Chicago's white supremacist social order and its connection to the Jim Crow South, capitalist enterprise, and colonialism. Locating the younger family in Chicago's South side, Hansberry directly engages crises produced by ghetto economies and dehumanizing living conditions, restricted educational access, and explosive encounters along the urban color lines provided the backbone for racial inequality in the urban North.

The "Aesthetic of Segregation" considered Black artists' new way of revolution recognized as a form of social protest. "Hansberry's revolutionary composition of reality and future possibility deeply shapes her aesthetic of segregation it determined a sensible approach of the black artist under Jim Crow in the post-Depression US" (Gordon 126). They speak out about systematic exploitation and its human costs, the color line maintains by the violence and social inequality. Hansberry's art provides a perceivable composition of Black oppression in the urban north which often appears distinctly different from those of the Jim Crow South. *A Raisin in the Sun* serves as evidence of Chicago's political and economic infrastructure of deliberate segregation. Hansberry uses the bloody demise of a "rat Big as Cat honest!" to set up the reality of Ghetto's life. There were no municipal sanitation services neither from the Government nor from the landlord so rats and roaches thrive. Even if there is a new baby died of a rat-bite landlord denies taking that responsibility saying "well they don't pick up their garbage anyway it was a nigger baby and they have a new one every year, so what does it matter?" So the rat in *A Raisin in the Sun* addresses the heartless neglect and economic exploitation of ghettoized communities.

*A Raisin in the Sun* centers on the Youngers, an African American a working-

class family living together in an apartment in Chicago During the mid-twentieth century. It inspects the consequences of racial prejudice on the fulfillment of an African American family. Walter must work as a chauffeur, his wife Ruth work as a maid, and Mama Works in the other's kitchen. So Walter is embarrassed about living in poverty he battles with the deferred dreams of his own. He wants to be free and become rich. The segregation caused the dream to become deferred they could not afford what white families could because they were paid less in the workforce. Following the death of the patriarch, they had different opinions on what to do with the insurance payment they'll receive soon. Walter Lee wants to make a business investment, while his mother Lina Younger intended on buying a house to fulfill a dream she shared with her late husband. Ruth agreed with mama in hopes that they could provide more opportunities for their son, Travis. Eventually, Beneatha Mama's daughter wanted to use the money for her medical school tuition. She wished that her family were not interested in assimilating into the white world. Beneatha instead tried to find her identity by looking back to the Africa Mama puts a down payment on a house at Claybourne Park in White neighbor. Walter Younger undergoes much suffering; he struggles to support his family and tries to discover new, better schemes to secure economic prosperity in society.

This research makes a modest investigation of African American struggle to establish their identity in the dominance of white supremacy in the United State. It accomplishes through the outlook on the subject of power and identity theory proffered by Michel Foucault. According to Foucault's theoretical perspective, power is constituted through the accepted form of knowledge. Power produces reality and truth. It exercises with the change of concept and belief of the individual in the society and the belief change discourses when discourses come within the power it becomes

the truth. Truth is to be understood as a system it circulates and functions in the form of a chain. Power holder exercises their power with the change of concept and belief of the individual in the society and the change in belief is possible only through the various types of discourse to manipulate power over the subjects. Power is not just the ruthless domination of the weaker by the strong; it is a complex network act of domination, submission, and resistance. Power holder always tries to show by establishing discourse that he is right and other is wrong. For example, the religious people think, they are close to god and can communicate with God, which sets them apart from the rest of the community. They are powerful because they have access to power. They form a class and whatever they say becomes the truth because they have power and it is the power of religion. Foucault states:

Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedure for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. It is linked in a circular relation with the system of power that produces an effect of power that produces and sustains it, and the effect of power that produces and which extended it-a regime of truth. (132)

Likewise, there are many types of power: religious power, economic power, relationship power, and many more. Each type of power has its own time and degree of activeness. But the fundamental goal of these power users is to rule the people. According to Foucault power is immanent in all social relations and that all social relations are the relation of power, whether in a family or the hierarchies of government and other social institutions. "Power" derives its strength from the fact that the subjects deeply believe in what it tells them, for it gives a sense of belonging and contributes to their well-being. Foucault's discourse tends to exclude, of course, the statement about the exploitation of the resources of colonized, the political status

accruing to colonizing powers the importance to domestic politics of the development of an empire, all of which may be compelling reasons for maintaining colonial ties. Rather it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonized, the primitive nature of other races, the barbaric depravity of colonized societies, and therefore the duty of the imperial power to reproduce itself in the colonial society and to advance the civilization of the colony through the slave trade and manipulate their power over non-European. So discourse is created to rule and survive by the power holder. Power operates both relationally and reciprocally Michel Foucault says:

Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of power agents to realize their will over powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things that they do not wish to do. Power is also often seen as a possession- something which is held on to by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control. (35)

In the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, colonialism was in practice. During the time colonizers imposed their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practice on their colonies. Through colonialism, the colonizer generated power over Africa, regarding economic development; the colonizer institutionalized the slavery system and exploited it to work as indentured servants and laborers in the production of plantations such as Tobacco, cotton, etc. During that time economics was an inherent part of the institution of slavery. Black was bought and sold in America and used to flourish industrialization, capitalism, and urbanism all that this meant for the black American slaves was that they were merely a means to an end of wealth, success, and power for the White master. The brutality of slavery made Blacks believe White skin people are superior to Black skin people and forced them to accept them they are the slave of whites. African Americans had committed genuinely

believing they are enslaved and had to serve whites. According to Foucault, power is generated in society by producing discourses and by constructing the truth. It is accepted in society and acceptance is the outcome of our constructed truth. So the institution of slavery made black skin people inferior to white people and constructed it as a truth. Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to further a particular desire for a purpose. Power is acted out from the positive and negative aspects. The absolute power is acted out to control or to rule. In this conceptualization, power is practiced as a negative force. It is employed and exercised through a net-like organization; individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. It is conceptualized as a chain or as a net that is a system of relations spread throughout the society rather than simply as a set of the relation between the oppressed and the oppressor. Individuals should not be seen simply as the recipients of power, but as the 'place' where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted. Power forces us to re-conceptualize not only power itself but also the role that individuals play in power relations- whether they are simply subjected to oppression or whether they actively play a role in the form of their relations with others and with institutions.

Power is exercised by people. The notion of a society that is separated by the power that makes social hierarchy as well. In American society, racial discrimination became the main cause of form the class between Blacks and White Americans dividing them white as superior and Black as inferior. According to the Subaltern Study the lower social classes and the other social group displaced to the margins of a society, it is a challenging task to find real consciousness of the subaltern for they often embrace the ideology of the elite class. During the slavery time Blacks stood as slave workers to serve Whites. They lived with the fear of brutality and cruelty so

they were often suffered at the whim of the White master. As a commodity slaves they were aware that “supper nigger” characteristics brought favors to the family and save brutality at the moment. They knew that failure to produce allocation of work, even if it was based on sickness, injury, or age could result in death or in being traded and separated from one’s family.

Foucault emphasizes power is constituted through accepted form of knowledge. To survive some Black accepted negative attributes from white stereotypes like Black were exhibited, incompetence, sloth, etc. the slave role became a sense of Black identity than periodic adoption. There was a significant gap between Whites and Blacks in the working field because black workers were forced to present in low-wage. Black workers, on average, were not being hired, promoted, or paid according to what would signal their level of productivity based on their experience or their education. In the starting scene of the play when Ruth brought up Walter’s dream of owning a liquor store, Lena Younger says “we ain’t no business people Ruth, we just plain working for folks” (1.2.42). She vividly justified how Black people accept them as inferior to white people and they are built to be a worker but not own businesses, they are represented as workers like chauffeur, cooks, labors, and cleaners as they are paid a certain amount of money. Though they struggle to become economically stable education and jobs enhanced self-development in the Black community.

After the abolition of slavery Blacks gained their sense of self-esteem through religion, language, and music. The language qualified the Black slave to maintain some remains of the African tradition and to develop a sense of pride. During the slavery time, Language and music are the symbolic medium by which culture and ideologies were transmitted. It helped to express individualism without revenge.

During the reconstruction time, the churches had long played an essential role in African American communities they supported and give slaves pride, self-respect, a sense of family and culture, organized the mission to find the skill and develop the talent, offered work-related services, and advocate for racial equality as well. A great number of leaders in the Black community came from the churches. The African American culture was preserved by the Black churches it planted, watered, given light, and nurtured. The music helped Black slaves to express individualism and establishment a unique sense of self. The bond of dependency and identification between master-slave relationships started to change Identity can involve two components like connectedness and awareness of belonging. When Blacks grew up in separate communities facing discrimination, and prejudice by white society that gave them a sense of community and tribal relationship among Blacks. For Blacks as a group to survive, many of the tasks of child-caring and emotional support were divided among the entire community. Blacks who had food, shelter, and other goods shared with those less fortunate which gives them a collective sense of community and identity signified particular beliefs attitudes, or history with which other Blacks also identified together. It awakened a lack of individual or self-development in the Black community.

Thus Black developed a collective sense of community and identity. In the early 1970s most of the revolutionary Black group's ideology integration, and collective voices were more important than the individual to operate for status and power. The self and the individual derived from the slaves formed its existence but it could not be the legacy for the new generation of African Americans. Some of the Black groups who strived only to increase racial-ethnic identification leaves the individual progress only to the level of collective identity. Therefore, generally,

Blacks were left without the self a sense of self-identity. Many middle-class parents lived in a predominantly White society with worries about how to instill a Black identity, culture, and strength in their children. Some worry that their children are too “white”. Lorraine Hansberry tries portrays their ethnicity and their cultural roots are more important which determine the healthy sense of self for African Americans. In her play,

Lina.I came from the five generations of people who was slave and sharecroppers but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay them no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. We ain't never been that dead inside. (3.1. 43)

These lines try to show how important one's heritage and self-respect are. Lena younger is trying to impress upon her son Walter who is so much obsessed with money. Even though the world makes them feel less of a person for being poor, they come from a proud heritage of self-sufficiency and self-respect.

The play portrays the old world and new world that are separated by more than forty years of social and political changes. Through the dramatic character, Hansberry examines the differences between the younger and older generation and how their varied experiences after creating the gulf of separation between them. The old look inward to the kitchen, the family, the home, and the new world started outward. Since the younger family is searching for a center a nucleus the old and new world cannot orbit peacefully. In the old world, Mama grew up in the trap of slavery in the way that Mama means she faced so many problems like being enslaved, cruelty, fear of lynching, separation, etc. She could not even get over from. But her children Walter and Beneatha grew up being “free” they faced other problems like lack of financial and social freedom, cultural problem, occupation choices, identity formation, etc.

Lina.No... something has changed. You something new, boy. In my time we were worried about not being lynched and getting to the north if we could how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too ... Now here come you and Beneatha- talking about things we ain't never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You ain't satisfied or proud of nothing we have done. I mean you had a home; that we kept you out of trouble till you was grown; that you don't have to ride to work on the back of nobody's streetcar- you my children – but how different we done become. (1.2. 74)

These lines demonstrate the ideological differences between the old generation and the new generation throughout the play, Mama's views are at odds with Walter's and Beneatha's views. Mama has lived with the idea that just freedom is the meaning of life because she grew up in a family that was never wealthy or successful she is used to her childhood lifestyle. She feels their family has already reached their potential with little growth towards anything more than what they already had. But Walter responds to his Mama "money is life" It shows that the new generation believes that their economic success and prosperous life will give them a particular identity and meaning in their life just freedom is not enough.

According to Foucault's power relation power is exercised through the relationship of power to use actions to modify the actions of others. So here in the play, all the character try using their power to influence each other. The protagonist of the play Walter Lee is trying to be influenced by his mother Lina Younger she tries to use her power on her son being older than him and the head of the family. When Walter younger comes up with his idea of opening a liquor store and becoming a business owner she brings family morals by saying they are not business people they are working-class folk and she didn't let him open a liquor store. At the end of the

play, Walter is influenced by his mother and supports the thoughts they brought home instead of opening a liquor store. Walter tries to use his power over his younger sister Beneatha because her sister is a woman and younger than him so he ignores her and her dream of becoming a doctor.

Beneatha shows her pride in her African heritage and tries to fight for her own identity but during that time searching for the identity was not easy for the Black women in America. They were far behind Black men and white women. Lorraine Hansberry tries to show that modern Black women who value their education and independence the society or families limits her by her gender and force them to be satisfied with being something smaller or housewife. “Who the hell told you had to be a doctor? If you crazy about messing around with sick people then go be a nurse like other women or just get married and be quiet” (1.1.38). Beneatha does not want to be dependent on a man but her brother alienates her and bases his argument on the fact that since Beneatha is a woman she should not even want to become a doctor. He isn’t supportive of her sister’s dream because of his chauvinistic view. It shows that Black women faced both gender and racial barriers even though they bias and discriminated. Though it seems the new generations of Black women were very much concerned and aware of this double-consciousness they were “Black” and “female” these two identities set their limits in the society. So Benetha’s character portrays the late 1950s Black women began to refuse the limitation on their race and gender they fight back and stand up to make their one’s identity, and they have started searching for their existences and believe in their abilities. “I’m going to be a doctor. I’m not worried about who I’m going to marry yet” (1.1. 50).

In the play, *A Raisin in the Sun* two female characters Ruth and Beneatha show how far Black female has come and how progress is being made over time. Ruth

values economic success while Beneatha values identity. Ruth is so money-obsessed that she proves herself by saying “shallow – what do you mean he is shallow? He is rich! Well – what other qualities a man got to have to satisfy you, little girl” (1.1.48-49)? The split is further emphasized by Beneatha’s description of George:

Beneatha. Well. George looks good he’s got a beautiful car and he takes me to nice places and, as my sister-in-law says, he is probably the richest boy I will ever get to know and I even like him sometimes but if the younger is sitting around waiting to see if their little Bannie is going to tie up the family with the Murchisons, They are wasting their time (1.1.49)

It reflects the generational distinction between Ruth and Beneatha even though they only had a ten-year age difference. In ten years they progress so much on an intellectual level to understand their one’s identity and self-determination and give their importance to their one’s identity than money. Beneatha represents all young African Americans who want to stand up for their one’s identity and connect to their origin. Her character shows how desperate the young African Americans are to make one’s identity and how obsessed about their heritage.

Hansberry juxtaposes the “Afrocentrism” which is so popular among the black youth. She tries to explore Black ethnicity and own cultural roots are important in determining the healthy sense of self for African Americans. In her depiction she shows the African culture and heritage through the character Beneatha Hansberry’s description:

Lorraine. She picks up the Nigerian dress and holds it up to her in front of the mirror again. She sets the headdress on haphazardly and then notices her hair again and clutches at it and then replaces the headdress and frowns at herself. Then she starts to wriggle in front of the mirror as she thinks a Nigerian

woman might. (1.2.66)

The above lines prove the younger generation of African Americans wants to find their African ancestry. The Nigerian dresses represent the African culture and heritage. Wearing them Beneatha assumes that she is a perfectly African girl, her natural hair without straightening she tries to express her social identity and pride as a Black woman. Wearing Nigerian dresses she senses who she is in and which group she belongs to. She enjoys the Nigerian folk song from Asagai represents celebrates Nigerian communal gatherings and rituals. Along with Beneatha's robe, this music introduces the rich heritage of African culture. Asagai who comes directly from Africa gives an alternative perspective on America's race problem in the play. His perception of African culture distances him from the American ideal so he insensitively remarks on Beneatha's "mutilated hair". Though Beneatha says her hair was "hard to manage" when it was natural. While Asagai claims that her choice to relax her hair is a remnant of assimilation Beneatha feels so much pressure. Beneatha's "assimilationist" hairstyle and her decision to cut her hair and wear it in its natural form represent a young African American generation in the late 1950s who is struggling to make an identity.

The young generations of African Americans are so confused to choose their cultural identity either assimilate into or diverge from White culture. So their culture could be problematic concerning making their identity in America. Hansberry's characterization of Asagai contributed to her critiques of Afrocentrism Asagai talks down to Beneatha by saying "Do you remember the first time you met me at school? You came up to me and you said: Mr. Asagai I want very much to talk with you. About Africa. You see, Mr. Asagai, I'm looking for my identity!" (1.2.62). Beneatha seems so naive her identity crisis is a valid experience created by an oppressive

culture but she wants to find her community and find a way to label who she is. Somehow she falls in between her roots as the descendant of a slave and her current position as a medical student in Chicago. So it suggests that the young African Americans in the 1950s faced these conflicts between integration into White culture and deviation from it.

However, Lorraine Hansberry synchronously disregards the values of the Black world she is paying attention to the assimilations rather than African American roots. The character of the play 'Younger family' accidentally tries to assimilate into a white neighborhood at Clay Bourne Park a white society and undergoes huge racial opposition. According to Michel Foucault, an individual identity can be constituted in and through the cultural forces and historical factors of that time but African American identity is shaped by the dominant culture of White, their identity has influenced by the dominant white culture. Living in white supremacy was founded on white superiority and the inferiority of the Black subculture. When they were forced to leave their place at that time their identity was affected by the new places and new cultural practices. Beneatha's interaction with two suitors, George Murchison and Joseph Asagai represents that tussle with cultural identity. George gave up on his African culture and submerges himself completely in dominance he try to be more like a white person in the way he dresses and talks about their heritage negatively:

George. Oh, dear, dear, dear! Here we go! A lector on the African past! On our Great West African heritage! In one second we will hear all about great Songhay civilizations and the great sculpture of Benin and then some poetry in the Bantu and the whole monologue will end with the world heritage! Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts! (2.1.81)

George Murchison portrays that assimilation may reward African Americans monetarily, but strips them of their culture. He normalizes a standard “white appearance, distancing himself from an African American identity and acting upon internalized racism. He asserts about being natural is eccentric and gives his criticism of traditional African American Garments and hair. George has a clearly Assimilationist world view he brushes off the tag by exclaiming nastily about the African culture. Beneatha’s involvement in Nigerian song and dance submerses in an idealized and deeply cultural past. “I hate assimilationist Negroes”! (2.1. 81) She distinctly tags George as an Assimilationist. Her relationship with George Murchison symbolizes the urge of African Americans to assimilate into white society. In her article “Lorraine Hansberry: Defining the Line between Integration and Assimilation,” YomnaSabar defines that entailed a profound and irremediable loss of one’s ethnic identity. In assimilation, the marginalized group identity dissolved into the culture of the dominant larger group: white America” The loss of one’s ethnic identity in favor of the dominant white culture is personified in George Murchison’s character.

By the end of the play, Beneatha’s struggle for identity remains the same when Asagai purposes to Beneatha and asks her to return to Africa with him. She shows her interest but she could not decide anything. She seems so vulnerable by saying: “You are getting me all mixed up – Too many things – too many things have happened today,” Beneatha says, I must sit down and think. I don’t know what I feel about anything right this minute” (3.1. 37). Hansberry tries to show that there is no way to make a concrete decision one way or another. Beneatha’s choice to straighten her hair does not make her assimilationist, and her choice to embrace Nigerian music did not make her an Afrocentric. Hansberry seems to be claiming that African Americans can

exist between these two extremes.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* focuses on African Americans' issues during the time of struggle for Black identity in the United State. In the context of their struggle to build their identity, the play deals with various aspects of the problem of African Americans and the challenges they have faced over the decade and long past. It mainly represents Blacks' accomplishments, and how far they have comes in fighting the challenges. The play tries to portray the generational differences as well which led to the conflict of different ideologies between the older generation and younger generation of African Americans concerning living life. African Americans' younger generation faces different challenges than their parents in their life. The old faced enslaved, brutality, fear of separation, fear of lynching, and so on. But the time has changed they have come a long way now from slavery and brutality to equality.

The generational conflict between the old generation and the young generation collectively shows the identity formation of African Americans. However, Hansberry examines the struggle and challenges to make and choose the right identity for African American youth in the 1950s. It sheds light on how the younger generations of African American decides and what challenges they face as they build their identity. Identity formation is a complex process and challenge which associates with Self-concept, Identity development, and values. In the 1950s most African Americans were proud of their ethnicity, believed in ethnic freedom and strong personal identity. The young generation of African Americans was born and grew to be "free" but they face inequality, domination, and inferiority over them. They were getting inferior treatment in the same country and same community since their childhood. So they took the stand and raised their voice for equal treatment in every sector of society.

They sought their existence by associating with their ethnic culture and decide to build their own better self-identity in the United State.

In the play *A Raisin in the Sun* characterization of two-characters Beneatha and George Murchison embody the progressive trend of African Americans in the 1950s. George is a Rich and educated African American but a shallow person who hates owns self for the pride of being superior to the Youngers family and he doesn't respect or appreciate his own African culture he does what everyone else is doing and assimilates himself completely into a white culture which doesn't make him a complete American. On the other side, Beneatha is an intellectual person with a great ambition to become a Doctor. Who embraces her heritage and searches for her identity to determine a well-educated Black woman. Beneatha's strong perspective regarding her self-identity is the result of her mother's contribution, nurturing her properly and educating her to give her a better life.

Nevertheless, the logic of the confusion to decide to choose their identity till the end of the play shows that there is no way to make a concrete decision. Because the young generation of African Americans was born and grew up in America but now they are aware of their origin and they know how crucial it is. They want to connect with their roots. So, they think of themselves as American and as African as well. They can neither completely immerse themselves in American culture nor fully return to Africa Even after knowing about their Ancestry, and the challenges and brutality their grandparents faced. Born and raised in one dominant culture and then molding them completely into another one is impossible for them. Some of the young African Americans in the 1950s simply wish to make it possible for them to be both An African and an American without being cursed and spit upon by their fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly on their face. So Hansberry

tries to insist that adopting some white culture or choosing to be an African by being natural doesn't make them as complete as An American or An African. Whether they want to adopt white culture or choose African, they can able to make their identity and existences in between two extreme identities. Therefore the freedom of African Americans to make and choose what they want to do is rises above all.

## Works Cited

- Delany, Sarah, et al. *Having Our Say: the Delany sisters' first 100 years*. Kodansha, 1993.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk; Essay and Sketches*. A.G. McClurge, 1903.
- Erikson, Erik. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. Norton, 1968.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power Knowledge*. Random House, 1988.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Pantheon Books, 1976.
- Gordon, Michelle. "‘Somewhat like war’: The Aesthetics of Segregation, Black Liberation, and ‘A Raisin in the Sun.’" *African American Review*, vol. 42, no. 1. [Indian State University, *African American Review* (St. Louis University)], 2008, pp.12 1-33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4030138>.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. Random House, 1959.
- Nemiroff, Robert. *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Olaudah, Equiano, et al. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, the African*. W. Durell, 1791.
- Washington, J. Charles. "A Raisin in the Sun Revisited." *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 22, no.1. 2013, pp. 109-124, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2904153>.